

The Power of Observation in November

The magic month of November to the Whitetail Bow Hunter is what dreams are made of. With the end of October bucks are primed to start breeding and mature bucks are being seen in the daylight hours. If you were unlucky enough not to have harvested a mature buck and you have been watching on your trail cameras, you may get the opportunity or a chance at a different older class buck you have never seen. While at work you're wishing you were in the deer's woods and when you can go the weather or wind is not in your favor. The magic of November affects not only the deer but we bow hunters and gun hunters also.



Deer Observation Log Books provided by QDMA (Quality Deer Management Assoc.) either personal or property logs can reveal important details about your herd's population size, sex ratio fawn recruitment, age structure of bucks in your area. Deer observation is one of the most useful types of collectable information that hunters can provide when used. The use of observation logs and Property Deer harvest Log can and will provide trends of the management of the deer in your area. However when hunters selectively harvest older age bucks, harvest data and observation data may/will differ. Therefore, your observation data for /on bucks can provide very useful information regarding buck age structure. Afield observations should be collected separately from camera data; comparing data can reveal useful and important details about your deer herd and your management program. Comments recorded may include unusual observations, what deer are feeding on, individual sizes and age of bucks and the chasing of doe, etc.

Times as they are, my work had slowed which has allowed me to spend



more time in the stand than ever before. Not good for my income but it did give me the opportunity to observe deer movements and behavior of all deer seen. With ten stand locations in three counties and notes from my observation log, eleven all day hunts in the stand from the first of November with 169 hours either AM or PM or both. Because I'm a bow hunter before

anything else, this also enabled me to watch deer both far and at times directly under my stand.

Most of the time I'm in my stand an hour or more before daylight and most times if deer are close I'll stay after dark until they move off. Extra awesome binoculars are a must! The areas or properties that I hunt are within a QDM management plan, hunting pressure has very little influence with deer movements until firearm season after Thanksgiving; however the observations I'm referring to maybe apply in any deer woods. I'm going to separate observations by sex, age and time of the month.

- Fawn Observations;

Fawns are the easiest just because they tend not to spook. However fawns can be a useful tool informing you when another deer comes into the area. On the other hand I've had fawns around me all day and when the mature doe or buck enters my zone they spook at the worst time.



Male and females alike are eating machines; several times I watched them eat everything within reach. I started timing them, they tend to eat for two

hours and bed down for one hour. At times while bedding they get to gagging and coughing as they learn to use their developing digesting system. Watching the weaning of fawns may seem to be one of nature's cruelest events, more so to males. Button buck tend not to get the message while doe fawns are tolerated more. A good reason for harvesting the nanny doe and keep this fawn buck in your area.

- Doe Observations:



The magic of November effects does maybe as much as bucks. Because we as hunters focus on the bucks we tend to over look doe changes. These changes may be helpful in your pursuit of that older class buck. The last of October into the first of November, like clockwork, doe movements from bedding to food source seem to change. This change varies from area to area depending on both buck to doe ratio's and changes in food sources. The doe groups that I observed tended to at times decrease in numbers without me harvesting any! We know that bucks urinate on their tarsal glands. Tarsal glands, located on the inside of a deer's back legs, are maybe the most important scent gland for deer communicating identity, social status and doe breeding readiness. While watching a group of doe feeding a few years ago, I noticed this doe instead of squatting to urinate she seemed to set down on her back legs, so I started looking at the staining of doe tarsal glands. I noted that the timing of breeding seems to coincide with staining of doe tarsal glands (I don't know of any study that backs this up). I can say I've taken dark stained doe tarsal glands and used them as a drag into shooting lanes and have had seven different bucks follow in one day. This has seemed to work anywhere I've hunted and used it.

Along with the why doe sighting may seem to fluctuate, while just the fact that being checked by bucks around the clock may start to limit doe



movements. However along with trail camera pictures at scrape locations, I've noted single mature doe sightings from the tree stand, in the middle of November most of the time with a buck in tow as he tends her. But

earlier in November when hunting near scrape and rub lines, I watched does check and urinate on or near scrapes then move off. Towards the end of the second week in November this behavior seems to increase. The property in Baltimore County has a much skewed buck to doe ratio, more than an hour before daylight a doe came in (10 yds from the bottom of my tree stand) and ended staying there nearly all day. When light increased I noticed that there were 6 scrapes all within sight, 4 of these were not there the day before. As other deer traveled through this area, she would get up from bedding and watch them pass. About 11 AM this yearling 3 point approached, she grunted and laid her ears back, that juvenile was not going anywhere with this old girl. She stayed until about a half hour before dark then went into the nearby field to feed. By the way her tarsals were very dark. This was the most extreme, but has happened a few times. My observations may suggest sometimes it's not just bucks searching out the doe but some doe search out the buck of their choice. In support of my conclusions, 32nd Southeast Deer Study Group Meeting February 2009 Paper *Unusual movements by adult female whitetail deer* Larry V. Tannenbaum- U.S. Army Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, Mark C. Conner with Chesapeake Farms, Maryland and others from Georgia and Tennessee. "During the breeding season, 9 of 10 does made an excursion from their seasonal home range that lasted an average of 24 hours. Eight of the deer excused between Nov.7 and Dec.9, which coincided with peak breeding activity on the study areas (Nov.5-25)."

This may be the reason deer sightings seem to drop off and then pick back up later on.

- Buck Observations:

With hunters now managing doe harvest early or if they choose to manage their does late in the season, November's Firearm season does provides the most effective tool for doe management.

Observations of bucks do increase in November. While button bucks (BB) are counted as fawns in most cases we can identify the BB from doe fawns. This will give you a look into your future of bucks in your area. As of 11/28/09 in my log I've noted 17 Quality Bucks and 47 Other Bucks (under 15" outside spread) just



from the first of November. As per many studies the older class bucks should remain in the area if not pressured away! Of the 47 under aged buck sighted most were seen more than once and some very often. This gave an opportunity to identify these younger bucks by body characteristics, hide color, throat patch, and in some cases antlers. Some of these younger bucks may leave the area, but noted sighting along with doe harvesting has proven most stay. By note keeping, these new yearling coming into the area can be identified as new. All of these yearling sighting are necessary and important part of managing for the future older class bucks. We (Maryland State Chapter) encourage hunters to use the 15" rule to protect the yearlings and some 2.5 year old bucks from be harvested. My personal goal is to only harvest bucks 130" class or more, out of the 17 Quality Bucks sighted only five were shooters for me. No, I did not harvest any nor did anyone else I hope, so far!

I'll harvest nanny doe most of the time, whenever I can, however I do restrain for the first two weeks of November, unless I'm in need of a drag. This year as

well as other years, most of Quality Bucks sighted and opportunities were presented in this time period. Now that the MSC QDMA fetus study (is in its second year), confirms that this time is on the upswing of breeding. As noted after the first two weeks nanny does sightings decrease (does go into “lock down”) with bucks are either on the search or tending.

These are my conclusions from my field observations and while yours may differ somewhat, observations and logging of this information can and will improve your success and it will increase your knowledge of Whitetail Deer behavior. I completely understand that most hunters



cannot spend this amount of time and days in the deer’s woods, but keeping a log for whatever time spend afield is a good idea. Even better, joining or starting a QDM Co-op will pool this information which will increase its value to you and others. QDMA membership and QDMA’s educational products can and will increase your knowledge of our whitetail deer while making you a better deer manager and hunter.

Take Home Message: “Every time you harvest a deer you are making a management decision, it’s your hunting area and you control its future.”

QDM only works when used!!!!

Respectfully,

E.W. Grimes

Director/President

Maryland State Chapter QDMA

